

XI. ANNEXATION

Annexation is a traditional and logical extension of the increased role played by a town in the provision of public services and utilities to surrounding areas, allowing the town limits to reflect the community of interest. Annexation also allows the owners of property added to a town to have a direct say in managing the services to which they financially contribute. An important part of this Plan is to outline a process for discussing and developing an annexation strategy between the Town and the County. The following guidelines will provide assistance to Town and County officials on matters pertaining to corporate boundary adjustments. These guidelines are also intended to provide basic information to citizens and landowners in the Hamilton area who have an interest in corporate boundary issues.

- The Town will conduct a fiscal analysis as a starting point to determine the comprehensive, fiscal impact of corporate boundary changes on the Town of Hamilton. Such analysis will thoroughly assess the responsibilities of the Town for the expansion of service provision as well as expanded utility service. The study will analyze the fiscal impact of these service and utility responsibilities from the Town's perspective regarding financial and budgetary considerations. The Town may also choose to consider expanding the study to assess the fiscal impacts of annexation from the perspective of typical property owners in the Town and JLMA.
- The fiscal analysis will be used to determine whether the Town should annex portions of the JLMA by proceeding incrementally or initiate a single annexation of the entire JLMA.
- Once the Town has reached a thorough understanding of the fiscal impacts of annexation, the Town and the County will begin discussions of which legal mechanism is preferred for making a corporate boundary adjustment. There are a number of options that could be considered:

Corporate Boundary Line Adjustments: These permit the Town and County to agree to move the Town corporate line, subject to approval of the circuit court. This procedure is streamlined, but allows no conditions or terms of agreement beyond the location of the new line. It creates no period within which additional annexation is barred.

Voluntary Settlement of Annexation: This is a type of annexation agreement whereby a specific area is sought to be annexed. It may be initiated by the Town or by petition of 51% of the voters of an area. This process entails hearings before the Virginia Commission on Local Government and a specially appointed panel of judges. Terms and conditions may be included and ordered by the Court which, unless otherwise agreed, will prevent the Town from seeking further annexation for a period of ten years.

Agreements Defining Annexation Rights: This type of annexation agreement, as was adopted for the Purcellville area, allow the Town and County to enter into an agreement defining what area and under what conditions the Town may annex. The Town must reject its right to ever seek city status, but gains the right, but not the obligation, to annex all, or a portion, of the defined area by ordinance. The agreement is reviewed only by the Virginia Commission on Local Government.

- Any property located within the JLMA that is presently served by Town sewer and/or water may be considered for annexation by the Town.
- When a property is annexed, the property may be rezoned at the discretion of the Town subject to any legally vested property rights. The property may be placed into a transition phase, T-1 or the lowest zoning density. The Town will rezone the property to a zoning district that is consistent with the land use policy and proffer guidelines in this Plan.

GOALS – ANNEXATION

1. Enter into an annexation agreement with the County, subsequent to the adoption of this Plan by both the Town and the County, that will provide for the orderly planning by the Town of land within the JLMA in accord with the land use policies of this Plan.
2. The Town will only consider annexations that will maintain or further strengthen the infrastructure and fiscal viability of the Town and which are consistent with the policies of this Plan.
3. The annexation of properties should result in a reduction of the tax burden for the Town residents associated with the provision of sewer and water services.
4. The annexation of properties should increase the potential for cost reduction as a result of economies of scale.
5. Provide for a contiguous and manageable town limit that maintains the existing sense of community.

POLICIES – ANNEXATION

1. Tracts in the JLMA which are already fully developed and currently served by Town utilities (except for the 1999-2000 sewer extension to solve failing septic systems in the County) will be considered for eventual annexation.
2. Undeveloped parcels may be considered for annexation subject to compliance with the land use and utility policies in this Plan.

ACTION ITEMS – ANNEXATION

1. The Town will conduct a fiscal impact analysis of the costs and benefits of annexing all of the JLMA versus annexing portions of the JLMA incrementally.
2. Upon adoption of this Plan, the Town and County will hold discussions and decide whether an annexation agreement is the appropriate mechanism to address corporate boundary issues in the Hamilton JLMA.
3. The Town (and the County, if appropriate) will provide information to the public about annexation proposals and solicit public input on such proposals as early as possible in the annexation process.

9. Implement traffic calming methods for Hamilton's present and future streets, especially in trouble spots including, but not limited to, intersections on Business Route 7 at St. Paul Street and Hughes Street.
10. Develop and implement strategies (fines, "children at play" and "no through trucks" signs, citizen monitoring, public awareness campaigns) to encourage residents and visitors to follow traffic laws and enforcement measures, especially speed control.
11. Implement a network of pedestrian connections throughout the community, through the following steps:
 - a. Seek planning assistance from Loudoun County and the Commonwealth of Virginia to complete sidewalk repair/construction within Town as well as other pedestrian improvement projects.
 - b. Research and obtain grants to assist with completion of sidewalk repairs and new sidewalk construction within the Town.
 - c. Connect existing sidewalks/paths/trails by obtaining access easements from current residents to allow for those features across or through their property or street fronts.
 - d. Amend ordinances to ensure that sidewalks, paths, or trails (whichever will reflect the nature of the area) which interconnect to existing pathways will be provided in new developments.
 - e. Provide sidewalks/paths/trails to both Hamilton Elementary and the Harmony Intermediate School.
 - f. Provide access from the existing sidewalk network in the Town and JLMA to the W&OD Regional Trail.
 - g. Provide painted or alternate road surface crosswalks at several intersections near major destinations/features within and just outside of Town (elementary and intermediate schools, Town office, post office, public park, convenience store).
12. Encourage business owners and civic groups to cooperatively undertake a beautification program for the Town's main street and commercial core, including sites outside the Town boundary and at key entrances to Town. The program could include signs, landscaping and walkways.
13. Review zoning and development requests to ensure a desired balance and pace of housing development and to protect historic homes.
14. Review zoning, development, and annexation requests to ensure a healthy balance of residential and commercial uses in Town.